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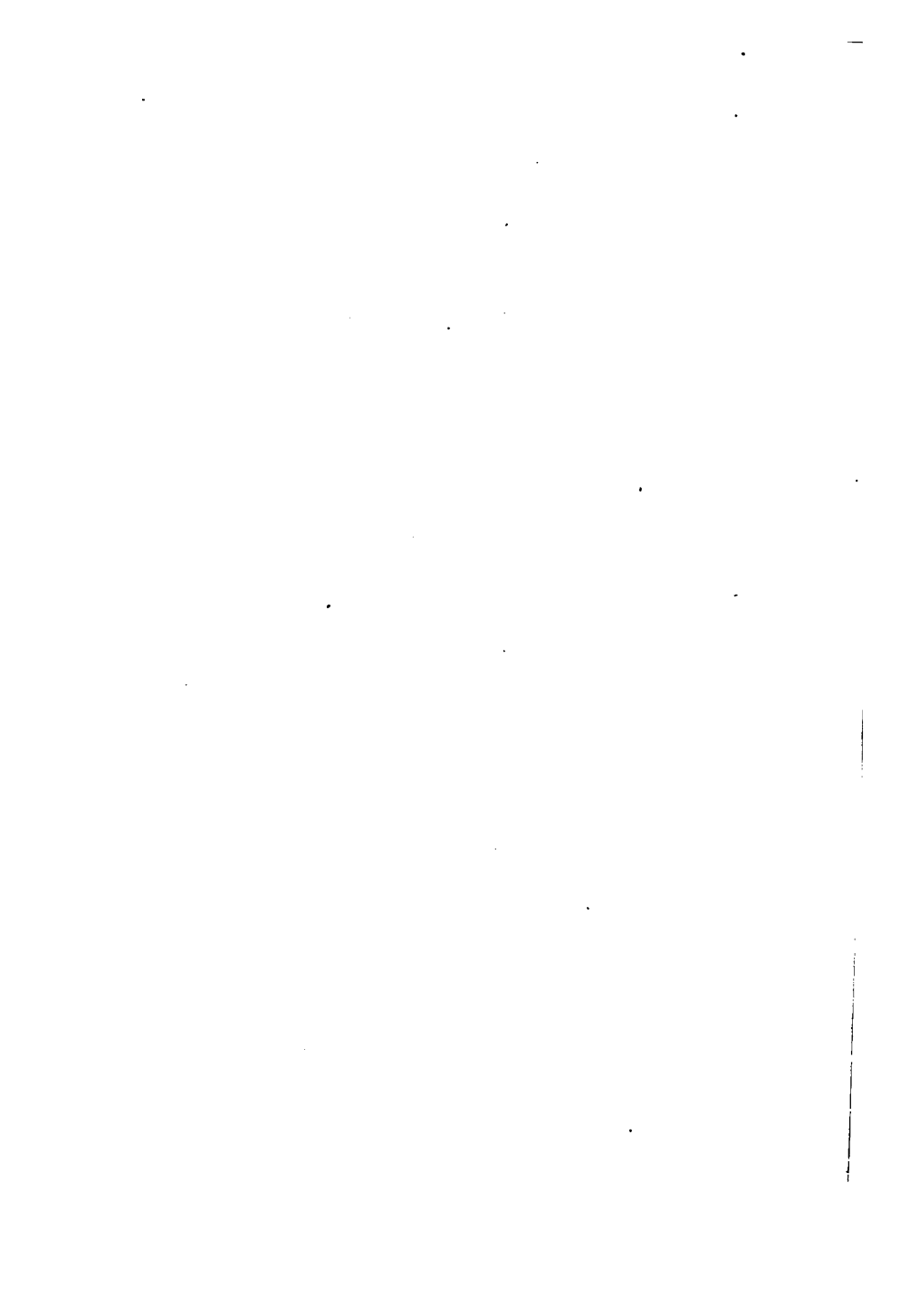
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FOUR
ASSIZE SERMONS
—
FRANCIS TRENCH



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ASSIZE SERMONS



FOUR SERMONS

PREACHED IN

YORK MINSTER

AND THE

PARISH CHURCH OF LEEDS

AT

The Yorkshire Assizes and General Gaol Delivery

MDCCLXIV

BY FRANCIS TRENCH, M.A.

RECTOR OF ISLIP

AND CHAPLAIN TO THE HIGH SHERIFF

London and Cambridge
MACMILLAN AND CO.

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TO
FREDERICK CHARLES TRENCH GASCOIGNE, ESQ.
OF PARLINGTON
HIGH SHERIFF

These Sermons

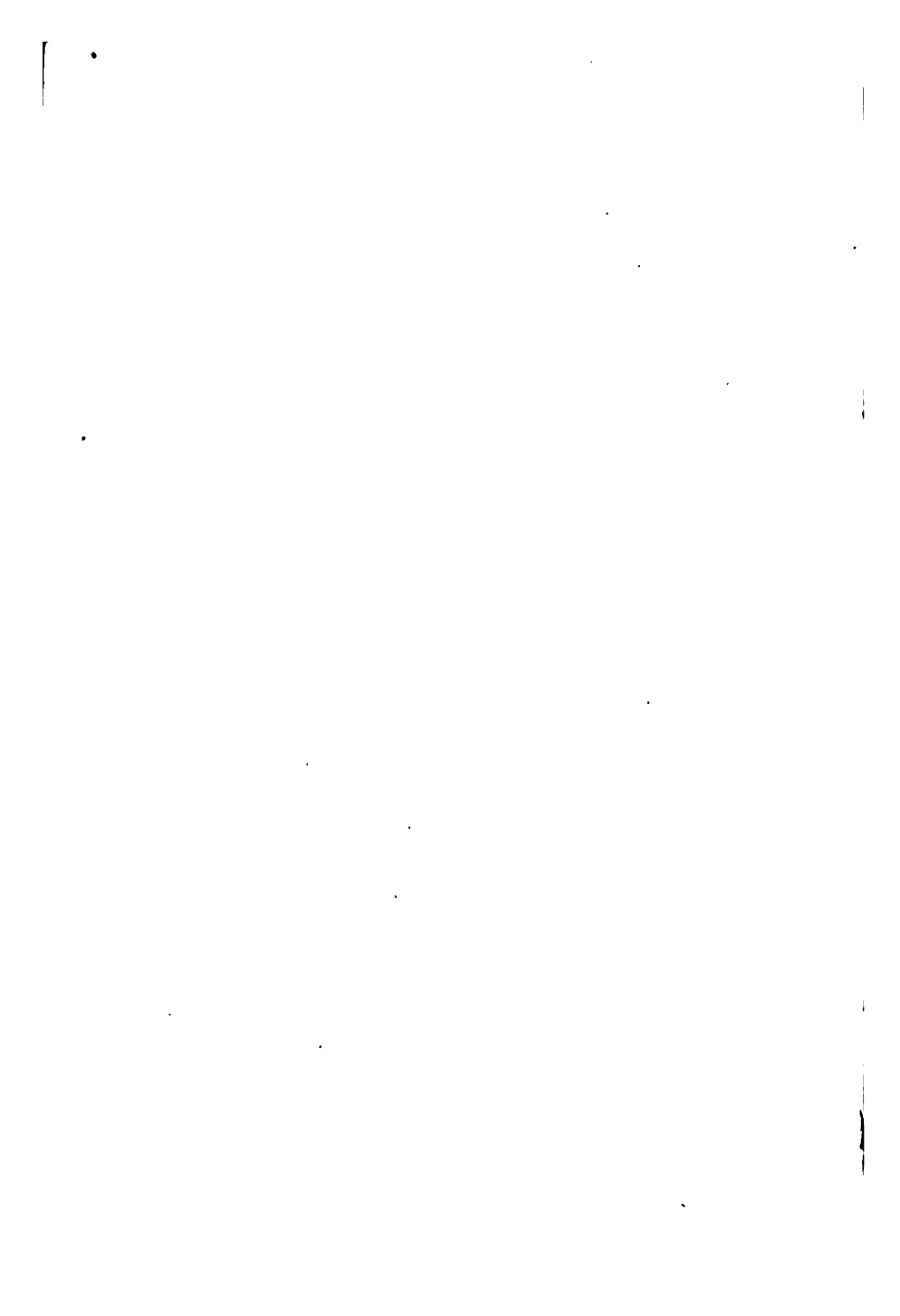
PREACHED AT THE YORKSHIRE ASSIZES AND GENERAL GAOL DELIVERY

OF MDCCCLXIV

ARE INSCRIBED WITH MUCH REGARD

BY HIS FRIEND AND COUSIN

THE AUTHOR



FROM the recent establishment of the Assizes at Leeds, the duty of the High Sheriff's Chaplain includes two Sermons at that town.

The second Sermon of this Series, preached at York in July, was preached at Leeds in December.

CHRIST OUR ADVOCATE.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN YORK MINSTER AT THE YORKSHIRE
SPRING ASSIZES

SUNDAY, MARCH 20, 1864.

I. JOHN, CH. II. PT. OF VER. 1.

And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

THERE are no subjects on which our Lord Jesus Christ spoke, or on which the apostles wrote, more frequently than the two following:—1st, on the right way to obtain peace and forgiveness, under the knowledge of our personal sin in the sight of God; 2ndly, on the grand duty of keeping out of sin. With these two objects in view St. John writes here. First, he tells us that the ‘blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;’ and then he warns us against sin, ‘These things write I unto you that ye sin not.’ The two objects are perfectly compatible. No system of religion could be complete without them both. Again, he comforts and encourages the penitent or ‘poor in spirit,’ as indeed all Scripture does, while it gives no hope whatsoever to those who are satisfied with their own merits and conduct, as a plea for their acceptance with God at the Judgment day. For having spoken already of the blood of a dying Saviour, he now speaks of the intercession or advocacy of a living Saviour. ‘And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’ I doubt not,

brethren, that you will see at once how suitable my subject is to this present occasion. There is a noble and very merciful advocacy sanctioned and secured, by our English code, to all who are accused. And this may well be employed as an emblem and fit frame of thought on the glorious truth that we, as Christians, have One, even Jesus Christ, ever sitting at the right hand of God, ever living to make intercession for us, as a 'Mediator and Advocate' in that high court of Heaven where we shall all so soon have to appear.

Referring to the Greek and somewhat difficult word here translated 'Advocate,' Pearson, in his work on the Creed, explains it of our Saviour as 'one called in and allowed to plead in our behalf.' This is, perhaps, a sufficient explanation of the name or title for our present purpose. More or less, all Scripture sets Him forth as fulfilling this high, tender, loving, and peculiar office.

So Jeremiah knew Him:—'O Lord, Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; Thou hast redeemed my life. . . . Thou hast heard their reproach, O Lord . . . the lips of those that rose up against me.*' As Satan was the accuser from the beginning; as, since the fall, all men, until their conversion, are sinners, cumbering the ground, with God's sentence, 'cut it down,' hanging straight over them, with the axe lying at their root; so all Scripture, from the beginning, bears its full testimony to the Saviour, as our intercessor for God's

* Lam. iii. 58, &c.

sparing grace. Abraham, pleading as a Prophet;* Moses, pleading and standing in the gap for his people; the high priest of the Jewish ordinances; Elijah on Mount Carmel; Job directed to pray for his friends;† all God's saints who prayed for others, and were heard—all were types and signs of Jesus Christ, as our great ever-living, all-prevailing Advocate. Yes! all saved souls, whether in heaven or whether on earth, have to look back to Him with all gratitude, love, and devotion, as the one only grand and procuring cause that sentence upon them for their sins and transgressions against God was not executed speedily; that time and opportunity were graciously allowed them to repent and believe; that Jesus was their Advocate when they knew Him not, loved Him not, served Him not, and, perhaps, as too often is the case, lived sinning against God so boldly and rebelliously that angels and men had almost to wonder at the restraint of His wrath—that He did not suffer His whole displeasure to arise. And nothing in heaven, nothing on earth, nothing in time, nothing in eternity, could ever have explained it, except one only truth, one only fact. That is, Jesus pleading for sinners such as we are. But, God be praised, that explains it the moment it is heard, and makes it clear as the day, for 'Him God heareth always.'

But the passage before us has a special reference to the present privilege of all true Christians. It is not merely some future thing. 'If any man sin,' or, as it

* Gen. xx. 17.

† Job xlii. 8, 10.

would be better rendered, 'any one,' man, woman, or child, 'we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' And away, at once, as a suggestion of Satan, unworthy of any right-feeling man—away with the thought that any encouragement to carelessness is here, any ground of palliation to the conscience for sin! God forbid! No more so than in the Gospel itself. Instead of Jesus being thus to any one (as Scripture expresses it) a 'minister of sin,'* whosoever has a spark of grace, light, and the Holy Spirit's teaching, would utterly and at once abhor any such notion. 'Repudiate' is the word which I was going to use. But I change it. He will not—he cannot entertain such a thought. 'Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid.†' Paul's answer would immediately be his also. That Jesus should have suffered for his sin will make sin more terrible and odious even than the sight of hell's avenging fire. That it should have been needful for Jesus to rise again, and sit at God's right hand, ever living to make that intercession for us, which all the saints on earth or all the angels in heaven, could not have made effectually, but only He who earned this right by His cross, merits, and righteousness—this, brethren, will show the enormity of sin, and make God's people hate it and shun it more than all the flashes and terrors of Mount Sinai's law. That we have an 'Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,' will be to them a link in that chain of love by which God the Father binds them to Himself; and

* Gal. ii. 17.

† Rom. vi. 1.

to break it, by willing and deliberate abuse of this glorious privilege, will seem not only a hateful thing, but more, much more—just an impossible thing even to enter their hearts.

Moreover, brethren, just in proportion as we know God in His holiness, and ourselves in our own want of it, shall we also know how urgently we need Jesus Christ as our Advocate with the Father, every day, hour, and minute of our lives. Between the kind of sins committed by those who (to use Scriptural terms, which after all are the best) are yet ‘in the flesh,’ and by those who are ‘in the Spirit’—by those who are walking in darkness, and by those on whom the ‘true light shineth’—there is, in God’s sight, and according to the word, no less difference than between earth and heaven, fire and water, or any other two most distinct and contrary things. There are those who are now saved sinners. But never in Scripture, and never in godly books, nor in conversation with any true servant of God, have I seen or heard anything to contradict the truth, summed up in the article of our church, that the ‘evil infection of sin doth remain even in those who are regenerated.’ And it too will show itself, at all events in God’s sight, and in the sight of His own true servants also, infinitely more than they ever saw it in their unconverted days. Let me ask you on this subject one question. Who in the Scripture most confess and bewail their sins—who but the most godly saints

—a Daniel, with his shame and ‘confusion of face’*—a Job, with his abasing cry, ‘I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes’—a David, with his own image and likeness, ‘I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin hath my mother conceived me’—an Isaiah, with his ‘filthy rags,’† as the wonderful but only fit emblem even of his best righteousnesses, as searched and examined by the strict eye of God—a Paul, crying out, ‘O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ So too with all the true children of God in every age, clime, or condition of life—yes, without exception. Just in proportion as they have advanced in holiness, as they have known the Lord and themselves better, so have they also more deeply felt their own unworthiness, demerits, and sin—their own personal need of the one, simple, unmixed Gospel, through their Saviour’s work, past, present, and to come. Their faith in Jesus, as all their salvation, looks backward to Him crucified on earth—upward to Him pleading for them in heaven—forward to Him who will return for them in glory. They all feel, in the deepest depths of their minds and hearts, that they cannot afford to lose one single privilege in Christ’s person, or work, or in His gracious offices, on their account, past, present, or to come.

Therefore, indeed, we may well rejoice and be glad that ‘we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’ Observe it is written ‘we have’—not merely have had, or may have, or hope

* Ch. ix. 8.

† Ch. lxiv. 6.

we have, or shall have. At this present moment Jesus thus acts for all true Christians. Take a few similitudes or illustrations. Our counsellor or earthly advocate must know that court of judicature where our cause comes on. Jesus knows all concerning the high court of Heaven. An earthly advocate is duly called and appointed to his place and office. Jesus is appointed by the Father, even God Almighty. An earthly advocate ordinarily undertakes any cause, however difficult, sends no client away, howsoever he may have broken the law of his country. Jesus refuses none who would come to God by Him, whatever their sins and breaches of God's law in past times may have been. An earthly advocate is faithful to his client, and his honour is involved in never betraying his cause under any circumstances. So the name of Jesus is 'faithful and true,'* and 'he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.† The judge listens to an earthly advocate, because he has authority to plead. God the Father listens to His own Son. An earthly advocate delights in his work, if successful, and remembers to his dying day some arduous case, thought perhaps by many to be hopeless and desperate. Jesus has brought many to justification and eternal life whom Satan accused, and the world accused, and their own conscience accused, and even the church of God would almost have numbered with the reprobates, who surely would be lost, and 'that without remedy.' An earthly advocate is trusted by

* Rev. xix. 11.

† 1 Pet. ii. 6.

his client, who, if he has any sense, keeps back nothing from him, tells him all his true condition—all, if need be, that he has done even in breaking the law. For he is sure it will not be brought against him, but that the more his advocate knows, the more will he be prepared to defend him, whatsoever aspect his case, when tried, may present. So, if we have our spiritual senses alive we shall confess all to the Saviour—we shall keep back, we shall hide nothing, from our heavenly Advocate. In communion with Jesus we shall tell Him all our guilt, all our breaches of God's holy law, all our defilement, all the aggravation of our sin without any restraint. We shall tell all in His listening ear, pour out all our confessions before Him, sure, quite sure, of His aid and sympathy. Not only that, but also sure that none of these confidences and confessions shall ever be used for our hurt, but always for our benefit in the high court of Heaven. Such are a few parallels, but they are not yet exhausted. Earthly advocates often fail in their clients' defence—Jesus never. They are sometimes weak—Jesus is 'mighty to save.' They are sometimes faulty—Jesus is perfection itself. They may carry one cause, but lose for you the next—Jesus is 'able to save them to the uttermost who come to God by Him.'* Your earthly advocate, in whom you have trusted a long course of years, may die at any moment, perhaps at the critical time when you most need him—Jesus is 'alive, even for evermore.'† 'Death hath no dominion over Him.'

* Heb. vii. 25.

† Rev. i. 18.

An earthly advocate may succeed for you in an inferior court, but against such decision an appeal may lie to some higher one. You may still remain in uncertainty as to the final issue of your cause. But every cause which Jesus pleads He carries finally. The decision changeth not; cannot be changed. It is more fixed than Mede or Persian code. The covenant of grace is sealed to you by it, 'ordered in all things and sure.' Eternal success is put beyond all possibility of doubt. And with one more comparison I shall end. An earthly advocate may be an able man, but he may be overmatched by one abler still. Jesus is matchless; He standeth alone; He hath none who approach Him in wisdom, in power, in might, in sympathy, in mercy, in labours of love for all who take Him for their Advocate; while Satan, your accuser on the other side, though he could silence and defeat *us* before our Judge in one single instant, cannot silence or defeat our Heavenly Advocate, with His own blood, His own sufferings, His own merits to plead, so that mercy may 'rejoice against judgment'—so that the challenge may be published aloud and abroad, 'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.'*

Such a One, brethren, is our ever-living, ever-loving Advocate. Such is our Mediator and Friend

* Rom. viii. 33, 34.

in the presence of God. I have sought to touch on a few points of His excellency, in that special office of the text to which we have closely adhered. May the Holy Ghost fill up these truths in you most abundantly, clear them to your understanding, write them indelibly on your hearts, make them of practical and constant application by you, according to your own need! I do not know, brethren, how it is with *you*, but I can truly say for *myself* that it quite humbles me—it strikes me with almost shame to speak or to preach on such a subject, and yet to find in myself such little application of these truths—such a poor realisation of them in my own experience and life. I think it not unlikely that you may share in the very same feelings. But the way is clear for you through Jesus Christ. Confess then again all these omissions, all this neglect, all this disregard of your Advocate, even unto Him. A noble and a pious warrior once prayed as he entered on the battle-field, ‘If I forget Thee, O God, this day, I beseech Thee not to forget me.’ And a blessed prayer, too, which I doubt not was heard and answered. We often—too often—forget our Heavenly Advocate. Let us confess it—ask mercy for it—but never lose our confidence in His not forgetting us. He delighteth in those who ‘trust in His mercy,’ neither doth He slumber nor sleep. And let this confession be accompanied with prayer for more grace to exercise this very privilege, that we may employ it more thankfully and constantly during all our remaining days. And may

the Spirit bless unto us all these considerations, now laid before you! There is a common saying that 'he who pleads his own cause has a fool for his client.' It is very expressive and true, and worthy of remembrance as applied to spiritual things and our cause with Almighty God. Pride and self-sufficiency, ignorance and presumption, unbelief and want of trust in some earthly advocate—these, and many such like causes, or a combination of them, have often induced one or another to plead for himself when he might have had the assistance of a 'fit man.' But the proverb holds good still. And similar reasons too (if you think upon them) will very much account for the unwillingness of man to employ Christ's advocacy, so freely offered him—pride and self-sufficiency, ignorance and presumption, unbelief and want of trust in Another, though He be no less than Jesus Christ the Saviour. May the Lord deliver all in such conditions! But adhering to the text, and using it as written, applied, and enjoyed by all the true children of God, and being persuaded far better things of many present here in this assemblage, I would now only stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, and entreat you to abound more and more in your employment and in your enjoyment of Christ's blessed and unfailing advocacy. His ear cannot be wearied by all your applications, under the sense of your sin and transgression. His heart is never shut—His sympathy never refused—His voice in your behalf never put to silence. The danger to yourself and the loss of privilege—the affront

and unworthy bearing to your Lord lies not in the frequency or in the importunity, but in the rarity and in the neglect of your employing Him. Man is soon troubled by repeated 'applications—but Jesus never. It is simply but beautifully written about asking gift after gift from our God—

The best return for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from His gifts to draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more.

So too with all petitions—so too with all applications for our Lord's Advocacy. Oh! how we need it! The assize of God will very soon be held. The day, in fact, is already fixed in the purpose of God. Are we ready for it? We are like a man with two causes to come on—one in each Court, Criminal and Civil. One concerns the gain or the loss of an everlasting inheritance, the other our own personal condemnation or acquittal and justification for life. Just think of that! And all must go against us in each trial unless Jesus be our Advocate. We, by original sin, and by all our own personal transgressions, have already lost and forfeited our inheritance. None but Christ can obtain it back for us. Our enemy has deprived us of it—and that not without our own consent to the deed, in our race originally by Adam, actually in ourselves as transgressors from the womb in thought, word, and deed. But not *only* have we lost our inheritance, and become poor indeed as to all possessions for the soul and eternity. For we have lost ourselves, become

culprits and criminals, by sin, unto the judgment of death. We have 'sold ourselves for nought,' as saith the Prophet. 'I have learned one thing at last,' said one who had lived a long life solely for this world and its gratifications, 'and that is, what a fool I have been all my days.' Sin hath reigned over us unto the sentence of everlasting death. Jesus alone has redeemed us, interposing His own precious blood, that where 'sin reigned unto death, there grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.' And through Christ's intercession, through Christ's ever blessed advocacy, all that He has done and suffered *for* us is made ours and available *to* us each day, hour, and minute of our need. And that need will continue to the end of our life. For we are and we shall be sinners till we put off this body of sin and death—till we depart to be with Jesus, or till He cometh again in His glory, as it may please Him. Cleave, therefore, brethren, (I say in conclusion) cleave to the Lord Jesus Christ with full purpose of heart, realising all that belongs to His person. Realise and make your own, both in word and heart, all that belongs to every one of those offices which He has undertaken to fulfil in your behalf! Be not satisfied without understanding them, through the enlightening power of God the Holy Spirit! Be not satisfied without employing them! Be not satisfied without enjoying them!

Walk in this light! Make full use of those wonderful privileges now set before you! Draw your strength

from that joy in the Lord which must attend their due appreciation. And see to it that all which concerns your Lord Jesus Christ, His Person, and His work for you—past, present, and to come—be to you all clear and definite, like the portraits and the paintings bequeathed us by men like a Michael Angelo or Raphael of old time, not a mere weak and discoloured daub—not indistinct, vague, shadowy, and indeterminate, as some teachers in these days, alas, would present it! Let not the Gospel or anything connected with it be to you an ‘uncertain sound!’

Beware of all this—and follow the ‘old paths;’ and live a life of simple, child-like faith in Jesus your Saviour, and in the Bible which tells of Him throughout. This will be, under God, your preservation against sin and transgression, and, at the same time, will give you a happy sense of peace and forgiveness, for Christ’s sake, under that conviction of your unworthiness in the sight of God which I trust you ever feel. St. John wrote the text for these twofold objects. So may that, now spoken to you, be employed by the Holy Spirit, both for the peace and comfort of your consciences, in the one only way which God sanctions or allows, that is ‘through Christ the righteous,’ and also towards all holiness of life and practice,—in a word, ‘that ye sin not!’

THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF MAN.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN YORK MINSTER AT THE YORKSHIRE
SUMMER ASSIZES

SUNDAY, JULY 31, 1864.

I. SAM., CH. VII. VER. 15, 16.

And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

THERE are few personages more honoured in the Scripture than those called ‘Judges.’ One Book is named after them, just as another is named after the Kings. Several of them have their special history, and some of them appear in that noble catalogue of saints, heroes, and servants of God, who lived piously and acted nobly in the power of faith, as told in the eleventh chapter of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews. And although their office was, no doubt, far more extensive than that which is signified by the same title now; although it united in many instances that of a deliverer, of a warrior, and of one even equal to the rulers and kings in our own day; and by this large union of high offices made up a fitting type and representation of Jesus Christ Himself in all His past, present, and future dignities for His church; still, we know from our text, and from many other passages, that circuits were held by the judges then as now. Men, like Samuel and others—

men of ability, integrity, wisdom, and good report—went in circuit through the commonwealth of Israel, thus ensuring justice and equity for the people. Nor have we reason to doubt that, as so very much of our laws and jurisprudence is derived from God's word, Blackstone and many others being our sure and confirming witnesses, so it is also with this ancient and most honourable system. Happily, too, the good custom is maintained among us that the sanctions of religion should attend these high administrations of the law. Among these what is generally called an 'assize sermon' is preached, and that solemn message from God is delivered which I have to address to you now. God is 'the Lord of all power and might.' All authority is derived from Him. And surely He should be in all our thoughts on these occasions. When the good king Jehoshaphat was ordering his kingdom he not only (as it is written) 'set judges in all the fenced cities,' but he gave them this weighty charge, 'Ye judge not for man, but for the Lord.' While, therefore, even a due sense of propriety, even common moral principle, should make us all now feel our own responsibilities, as citizens and members of the state, higher and holier claims are upon us, as those who should regard all things in the light of God's holy word. In this remembrance I shall endeavour to set before you now some few (though very few they must be) among those truths, and also among those duties, not to say privileges, fit for suggestion to us all, and not only so, but for application by us personally at the

present time. It is one so solemn in its various accompaniments—one of results so unspeakably important, not only to those accused and finally pronounced guilty or set free as innocent, but, also, to society at large—that we must, I think, feel it a privilege and relief to have some scriptural light shed upon a scene otherwise so dark, strange, mysterious, and inexplicable. For to such a scene every assize or gaol delivery calls us; even to a scene of crime and of misery; of one, or many, suffering through another's guilt; of stern retribution, at the hand of man's righteous justice, even at times to the sentence of death; a scene where all human ability, power, wisdom, and intelligence may fail—though, thank God, it very, very seldom does—to trace out guilt and establish innocence, and wherein all engaged, and all who consider it, should look with awe, and, at the same time, all due confidence to Him 'from whom no secrets are hid.' For He judgeth not as man must do, 'according to the hearing of the ear or seeing of the eye,' but in all perfect accuracy, and to Him we may ever look with all expectation that He may preside in our courts, through these means may 'execute justice, and maintain truth,' and (after one of His own titles in the Psalms) 'help them to right who suffer wrong.'*

First, then, as it seems to me, among the many doctrines, truths, facts, or realities which should now come home to us is the Fall of man from that original

* Ps. cxlvi. 6, Prayer-Book version.

happy, holy, innocent state, when (as it is written) God saw all that He had made, including man, and pronounced it 'very good.' Never again do we meet any such or similar declaration. Marvellous indeed, and yet most clear, are those solutions, those explanations of sundry moral difficulties, contained in the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis! Surely we know not *why* moral evil came into the world, nor shall we know it until 'we know even as we are known;' but God has told us *how* it came in. These accounts are no mythical stories, no mere human compositions, but facts—facts written for us by inspiration of God, things otherwise secret, but revealed to us from heaven, spite of what some at this day would persuade us in their unbelief. Well, then, in the fall of man, in our first history, according to the Bible, we have an explanation of that spectacle and scene which a court of criminal justice presents. We, alas! know little indeed—experimentally and by observation know nothing—of a state where sinless obedience prevails, rendered to a glorious and adored God by His creatures, and where all is love, termed in Scripture 'the fulfilling of the law,' one towards another. We, alas! are so grievously accustomed to the state of things now around us in a world which, as Scripture tells, 'lieth in wickedness'—to the constant breaches of all human and divine ordinances, to violence—that horrid evil specially named as bringing on the flood—to cruelty, to selfishness, injustice, and fraud, to oppression and wrong of every imaginable form and description—in a word, to all

sorts of openly committed sin against God and man, that we can scarcely conceive a happier and better state, without sin and without its consequences: though no doubt the inhabitants of heaven, or of any unfallen place in the countless dominions of God's world, look on a sinful world as the strange one to them. But all this evil originally came in through the fall; and all kinds of crime have had this as their beginning; and all kinds of sin, which we witness in others, or hear of as committed in times present or past; and all that inclination to transgression which we have, or have had, in ourselves, though it may have been restrained and not put into open practice—all this should be marked and acknowledged by us. And knowing all this, surely as the Scripture is true, we are bound to look this humiliating truth concerning our own common nature in the face. We must not shut our eyes to it, but take, accordingly, our befitting place, and acknowledge our own actual state, and receive humbly the charges of God against our own sinfulness. And at such a time as this we too should be freshly and forcibly reminded concerning the depths of degradation and guilt into which man *may* fall, unless upheld by God's help and blessing; and we should lay aside all pride, all confidence in our own strength, and all self-righteousness, and acknowledge with grateful hearts those many benefits, exemptions, and advantages with which God has surrounded us for our preservation, and not proudly take the merit to ourselves, as if we were in ourselves righteous.

Again—such a time as this should stamp our minds and hearts with a fresh appreciation of that most blessed doctrine, fact, truth, and reality, which should ever follow, or, rather I would say, attend the conviction of sin, as bound up in our own fallen nature, and showing itself in so many outbreaks and enormities in the calendar of crime. I refer, of course, to that Redemption—that mercy, salvation, and deliverance provided for all sinners who ‘truly repent and unfeignedly believe the Gospel.’ The same Scripture which tells us of our evil case tells us also of the sure remedy and of full restoration unto all our forfeited blessings through the Lord Jesus Christ. It declares, in the clearest and most positive way, that as ‘by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin’—and ‘therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.’ Accordingly, at this time we have a new and most special call to thank and bless God for giving His own Son to make a ‘full, free, and sufficient atonement and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world,’ by His cross and sufferings, His merits and His righteousness, and thus opening the kingdom of heaven unto all believers. And if at all times we should live gratefully in this remembrance, enjoying it, applying it, and constrained by it to ‘live a life of faith in the Son of God,’ and to serve Him always, there are also special times—and this is one of them—when we should lift up our hearts with renewed praise both for ourselves and for

those dear to us, and all our fellow-creatures, on account of that most merciful redemption which is in Jesus Christ—that where ‘sin hath abounded,’ there His grace hath much more abounded. And, truly, if anything can reach or affect us with due thought and seriousness concerning our own personal condition, and the condition of man in general, as responsible to God in heaven, it is such a time as this, when, in the execution of man’s laws and ordinances, we have the type and sign of God’s holy severity against the transgressors of His own laws and ordinances; and when to us, if we know what sin is, and what our own and man’s transgressions are in God’s sight, the one way to escape His condemnation must be precious indeed, and the way of mercy, pardon, and acceptance—i.e., through Jesus Christ—very bright to our eyes and dear to our hearts also. God grant, brethren, that ye all may see this way with enlightened understanding, love it with all heartiness, and follow it unto the end, till we meet in heaven, washed in the Saviour’s blood, sanctified by the Spirit, and glorified with exceeding great joy!

Once more. Such a period should not pass away without leading us to realise another mighty doctrine, fact, and truth announced to us in God’s word. It, too, is very humbling, in one sense, but exalting in another. Yes! as Jesus Christ and justification by Him is provided to deliver us from the *guilt* of sin, so the Holy Spirit and His living power is provided to deliver us from the *power* of sin. We are utterly weak in our-

selves to contend successfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Surely, as Scripture is true, there are powers arrayed against us, against our fulfilling God's will and commandments, too strong for us, by ourselves, to overcome; and if any one conceives that with him it is otherwise, that person has yet to learn the old proverb, not only of religion, but also of all true philosophy, even 'know thyself.' But farther still, who among us, if he does know himself, has not learned by much sad and sinful experience what his own real helplessness has been? Who among us, in the retrospect of life, from childhood upwards, has not to deplore very many and repeated occasions when he has not acted even up to the light of his own conscience, far less up to the light of God's holy word, but has yielded to temptation, and done wrong against God and man in thought, word, and deed? In one sense, at this remembrance we should be indeed ashamed, on considering our own life, not after the standard of custom or opinion, of fashion or our time, or any mere human rule, but when brought to the test of our real duty to God, and also to that of our true responsibility towards our fellow-creatures. And you would, I am sure, all be ready to condemn me as a preacher, and to charge me with preaching mere flattery and 'smooth things'—wretched opiates merely to lull your consciences—were I to set before you any lower rule than that by which we all are judged by God Almighty, and shall be judged by Him in the great day of reckoning. But, while we ought to be

ashamed of our weakness to resist sin, as proved so often in us, there is another and a kindred thing of which we need never be ashamed—I mean the confession of this helplessness. St. Paul said, ‘when I am weak, then I am strong’—i.e., when he felt his own weakness, acknowledged it, and sought and found strength. So it may be and shall be with us too. And we may, indeed, praise and bless our God for that abiding and ever-living gift, viz., the Holy Spirit, whose work in us is not less needful than Christ’s work for us. For He alone can strengthen us against the commission of sin. And He alone can enable us to fill out the wide circle of our Christian duties and high responsibilities towards God and man. And ‘God, who knoweth our hearts,’ has promised this Spirit unto all who ask for Him, and attached to this promise a word of assurance, at the same time most simple, touching, and glorious: ‘If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!’

Nor, again, should this time pass away without filling all present here with the deepest and most lively sense of their own special mercies and exemptions, while they consider (I trust with all Christian prayer and sympathy) the state of those who, at this season, have to meet the deserved and stern reward of their evil deeds. Very homely and familiar to many here, but at the same time most emphatic and true, and worthy of repetition, too, was that saying of a good old

saint of our land, who, seeing some one under condemnation, considered himself also, and spoke words to this purpose, 'Were it not for the grace of God, there is'—and he uttered his own name. Now, using the word 'grace' for all God's favour, care, and protection, we too may well take to ourselves and share a kindred sentiment. That saint knew (as we all ought to know) that he had been kept from offences against God, and also from those liable to penalty from man, not by any inbred nature of his own, different from other men, or by any power solely and exclusively gained by himself to resist evil, but by the goodness of God, exercised towards him in many and divers ways. Little, very little, can any of us conceive to what extent or in what way we too might have broken even human laws, had we been left utterly to ourselves, and subjected to all sorts of disadvantages of evil association, to the absence of instruction, and all those incentives to wickedness, under which, alas! some have had to live from infancy. I would repeat, without any hesitation, that man must be bold indeed, far bolder than Scripture or experience would allow, who would venture to say that, independent of all his advantages, he would have obeyed all his country's laws, rightly honoured all its institutions, never brought himself into penal danger of any kind at all. How many, therefore, among us, should heartily thank God, on these occasions, for all such immunities, for education, for the care of loving parents, for the absence of temptation from the daily pressure of distress and misery, for gentleness, not

violence, taught in their childhood, and for that sense of honour, honesty, and propriety, dear to all worthy English families, and fostered in so many homes, throughout all classes of society! How many in such a congregation have to thank and bless God for the atmosphere of peace in which they may have lived among loving friends, while so many had to live amidst scenes of the very opposite kind! And we may entertain all these right sentiments, we may observe and be grateful for all those happy and favourable circumstances, without in the least degree justifying or palliating sin and transgression, either in ourselves or others. God forbid that we should! That is another matter altogether. It would go against all justice, it would indeed be a most fatal and dangerous admission, that either in ourselves or in others sin and crime could for any cause be excused or justified. Neither God nor man will ever allow that. Therefore, the law of our land, supported by Scripture and all that is right, decides that where there is knowledge between right and wrong—and this exists, no doubt, in every sane person—there must be infliction of the penalty on the breach of that law. Order is heaven's first law. Of the ruler it is written in God's word, 'he beareth not the sword in vain.' The more quickly, the more surely it strikes, the better it is for all, to deter the wicked and protect the good. All are bound to join in maintaining and honouring the law and doing all in their power (at whatever cost to themselves it may be) to further justice and its awful sanctions whenever there

is crime against it. But, side by side with all this, you whom, thank God, it touches not, and has never touched, and I trust never will touch—you may well consider at this time, and with all thankfulness, Who it is that has made you to differ, Who has kept you in the paths of uprightness towards your fellow-creatures, Who has kept you from doing them either harm or violence, from committing fraud, or infringing the law of our land in any way, and allowed you, perhaps, to enjoy the praise of them that do well, rather than be subject to any contrary charge. These are good gifts, indeed. And the more readily, the more heartily, we ourselves receive that scriptural assurance that ‘every good gift cometh down from God’—that all our own personal advantages, whether of mind, of body, or estate—all our exemptions from evil contact, persuasion, and example—and all the ability wherewith we have resisted temptation, or fixed our hearts and our practice on that which is good (for all these are among God’s gifts and mercies towards us, whosoever we may be)—the better for us, and the more we shall approach the realisation of those truths which my special office this day enjoins me to commend. I am well aware that they are not attractive to our own self-confident, self-righteous hearts. But that is the very reason why they should be asserted. And if I were asked for any sentences or any prayers suitable to those who meet in a criminal court, or hear an assize sermon, or in any way have to do with, or see, or hear of that concentration of sin which such a spectacle brings up before us,

they might not inappropriately be, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;' 'Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep all the laws both of God and man.'

Happy too will it be for us, and a good evidence that we do not listen in vain to the solemn admonitions of this time, should it send us forth with fresh resolutions, energy, and diligence in doing good to our fellow-creatures; and specially to those who, from their condition, may be less favoured. Jesus hath declared, 'The poor ye have always with you, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good.' The ignorant, too, are always with us, and, alas! it must be added that vice, and incentives to crime, and inclinations to commit it, and the need of contending heartily, manfully, wisely, and perseveringly against it is ever with us too. Happy, therefore, I repeat, will it be for us if, enjoying ourselves the inestimable blessing of a good name and character, the absence of all charge and suspicion of offence against human law, and that full free liberty of action towards all good and benevolent endeavours which we in our land so remarkably enjoy—happy will it be for us, should we be now awakened or freshly strengthened in devoting ourselves, even more and more, to advance the welfare of any who may need our care and assistance. Let us show more of true, enlarged, Christian public spirit—more decided efforts to prevent or check that which is evil—to promote that which is good among our population!

Grievously and sinfully indeed do they err who say nothing can be done. First of all it is untrue. Facts contradict them. But where is their faith, their hope, and their love? Fearful must be their state who echo the question of Cain, 'Am I my brother's keeper?—who despise the command of God 'not to suffer sin to lie upon our neighbour'—i.e., of course, so far as in us lies by all proper means to remove it. Selfishly, indeed, and meanly do they act, who, hugging themselves in that circle of safety which the law provides for them and their possessions, will not touch the burden, to be carried by us all, thankfully and willingly, in promoting those measures and those means which bring honour and obedience to the law. In no country whatsoever—at least in none which I have ever read of, heard of, or visited—are these measures of intelligent benevolence more largely maintained. Our country is renowned for them throughout the world. They are the honour, the glory of England. And thankful should we be that there are so many who search out the plague-spots of our social state, and labour to cure them ere the contagion spreads, and to encourage all in whom the signs of reformation appear. But because so many of our good citizens do thus endeavour, it is no reason at all why the preacher should abstain from exhortations to all present here to 'abound more and more'—'to go and do likewise.' Where is the hot-bed and the seed of crime? Where are the materials from whence it is made up. Surely these may be clearly noted! The answer surely may be,

ignorance, intemperance,—the violent, unsubdued, undisciplined spirit—the passion for excitement, regardless of all consequences—recklessness for this world and for the world to come. Hence is the calendar of crime. But what would it be, I may ask, were all those good institutions removed which indeed are the gems of our land, shining so brightly, and spread so abundantly, that dark indeed must that corner be, whether in our streets or lanes, whether among our highways and hedges, where no ray from them ever penetrates? What would our land be were our churches and chapels all shut up at once—our preachers and all Christian visitation put to silence—our Infant schools, Sunday schools, Day schools all dismissed; and not only all these public institutions brought to dissolution, but were there a collapse and end of all private and personal endeavour to stem evil principle and practice, and to advance that which is pure, honourable, and of good report? Yes, I would speak to reasonable men, to the men and the women of this place, or of any other town or city. I just ask what then would become of you? What then would be your calendar a few circuits from this time? No answer could be given ample and wide enough in its comprehension—discouraging enough to suit the actual case. Let me therefore, as the preacher of this day—let me earnestly intreat you all to act at once on these thoughts and convictions! Your conditions vary exceedingly. Some have more, some less influence. Some have apparently more, some less

means of doing good. But every one among us has his own circle of true Christian and true social usefulness. The size of that circle is comparatively unimportant; but the mode in which we fill it—that is the grand matter. Your prayers, your example, your judgment, your sympathy, your diligence, your self-denial, your liberality—all this, kept in exercise by you, must be effectual. God promises his blessing on such endeavours; and His promise is abundantly fulfilled even to our present sight. And even if we do not always see the results at which we aim, that is no reason for faint-heartedness and unbelief. Faith is the life and spirit of all Christian labour for the good of our fellow-creatures. If time and opportunity allowed we might bring forth many signal instances where Christian effort has rescued evil-doers from their evil course, has snatched them even as brands from the fire, has restored them even to a life of integrity, and made them blessings, instead of curses, to their families, their neighbourhood, and the country at large. But this is not exactly the subject on which I would now dwell. My object is wider; my object is to show all present what their privilege is (or at all events may be), if, first giving their own hearts and their own lives to their God and Saviour, they make it their business and find it their delight to do good, like Jesus (not only their Redeemer, but also their Head and Example), both to the bodies and the souls of all within their reach. For though you may not see, though you may not hold in your own hand, all the

links of that blessed and, as it were, golden chain wherewith true Christian love binds together, in the best of bonds, our whole social life—yet they will be there—yet they will be kept in all their strength and glorious combination. And many shall by you, instrumentally, not only be preserved from eternal woe and wrath, and brought to heaven, but also, as to this life, many shall be kept from crime, and that present misery which crime brings with it, and led into a life of integrity and happiness, ‘in favour with God and man.’

It was, brethren, the vow and the prayer of a mighty and most noble poet of old time that he might *live*, pleasing and serving for their good his fellow-citizens; that he might *die*, bequeathing to his children and posterity a good and an honourable name.* May such, speaking for this present world, be also your life—such your death. But we, as Christians—we who have the future eternity opened to us so clearly and so fully in the word of God—we must not meet together in this holy place or at this solemn time without remembering that future judgment, not of man, but of God, which we shall all have to meet, and according to which our eternity will be one of unspeakable woe or unspeakable joy. Therefore, may God for Christ’s sake grant that the consideration of those great leading truths which I have now touched upon, though, of necessity, very briefly indeed, may be of service to us towards our own preparation for that

* Pind., Nem., Carm. viii. 59, 67.

sure coming day—I mean the Fall of man, Redemption by the blood of Christ, our own moral and spiritual weakness, the strength of the Holy Spirit as working in us, the call to confess our own sin, with thankfulness to God for all our preservation from it, and, finally, the high Christian duty and privilege incumbent on us all of laying out ourselves heartily and perseveringly to do good to our fellow-creatures, after the example and most blessed pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE PRAYER OF SOLOMON.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF LEEDS AT
THE MIDSUMMER ASSIZES

SUNDAY, AUGUST 7, 1864.

I. KINGS, CH. III. VER. 9, 10

Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

A MULTITUDE of passages might be quoted from Scripture showing that one of the plainest duties towards God and man is to maintain that which is just and equitable between man and man in every way—to avoid doing any violence and harm to any fellow-creature, and to prevent it to the utmost of our power by all legitimate means. And while it is the privilege and duty of those in authority to carry out the purposes of God in the execution of the law, as being appointed to ‘attend continually upon this very thing’—while it is their privilege and duty to ‘help them to right that suffer wrong,’* ‘to loose the bands of wickedness,’ and ‘to let the oppressed go free,’† to ‘see that those who are in need and necessity have right,’ and to exercise their high functions so that evil-doers may not spread ruin and misery around them, and that all the well-dis-

* Ps. cxlvi. 6, Prayer-Book version.

† Is. lviii. 6.

posed in our land, may 'lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty' *—while all this is the duty, privilege, and work of those in authority, it is no less that of their fellow-citizens to do their part in forwarding all these same good objects. And each one of us, for conscience' sake towards God, and for love to our fellow-creatures, should show all due sympathy with the law, and make it our business to honour and sustain it. And this, I trust, is the spirit and habitual course of all present here this day; for these, I repeat it, are among the very plainest calls upon us as Christians, honouring God's word, as subjects of our Queen, and as members of our favoured state. And I might with the greatest ease bring forward not one text alone, but a multitude of texts (whether it were in plain declarations, or in solemn admonitions, or in whole histories), out of which the truth now set before you, concerning honour and obedience to the law, shines forth so brightly and conspicuously that no man could gainsay it except through gross ignorance and imbecility of mind, or through a prejudice against the law because it condemned his own evil doings.

But while, brethren, I repeat it, that Scripture is full, very full, of this subject, I trust that all present here will see the special fitness of our text on the following grounds, viz., the evidence and convincing proof afforded to us by it concerning the exceeding value set by that God in heaven, Who is the same

* 1 Tim. ii. 2.

yesterday, to-day, and for ever, on the righteous, able, and wise administration of the law. What is the history presented to us here? I must be very brief in recording it, for which I am the more ready, as being well aware that so many of you know it well. 'In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast shown unto Thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before Thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with Thee; and Thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that Thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, Thou hast made Thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And Thy servant is in the midst of Thy people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart *to judge* Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this day Thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.' Not to quote the history at further length, God mightily proved—God abundantly praised—God richly granted his petition, and promised him with it all kinds of blessings.

Now, brethren, I pray you, observe all this, so briefly stated, yet containing in it such valuable lessons for us, applicable most closely to the present solemn

occasion! First, observe that He, who foreknows all things, when He made this marvellous offer to Solomon, knew well what the desire of Solomon's heart would be. He knew that it would be for ability *to judge between right and wrong*, as the great royal head, fountain, and example of true judgment and justice among God's people over whom he reigned. Then observe the answer of Solomon, and remember that his title from God was nothing less distinguished than that of '*the Wise Man*.' Remember that his most capacious mind ranged over all subjects of study, all the interests of mankind, over everything which human power could grasp and attain unto. Yea, more! Remember that he actually, by his wisdom, and God's blessing on it, brought the nation over which he reigned, even God's own favoured people Israel, to the utmost height of prosperity which it ever reached. And (to crown all) remember that language of Scripture about him, used even unto this day, and ever on the lips of men, as signs and symbols of the utmost social and national happiness, penetrating all places, homes, and classes of society: 'He had peace on all sides round about him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.'* Now, brethren, observe all this! I speak to you as thoughtful and intelligent men, able to follow any line of argument, even were it far more difficult. Here is God making to His chosen servant Solomon an unlimited offer, which He knew, in all perfect accuracy, would be

* 1 Kings iv. 24, 25.

answered by Solomon exactly in the way it was. Here we have Solomon, that illustrious, far-seeing, and (until, alas! he fell, with which this day we have nothing to do) most nobly-gifted ruler and man whom perhaps the world ever saw, or ever will see—here, I say, we have this Solomon answering God's unlimited offer with one petition only—and that was for ability to execute justice and judgment among his people. Before this all other objects fell away in the distance. On this occasion they were as nothing to him. For his father David had taught him, and very likely he had heard the beautiful and solemn words of that father—his 'last words' as the Scripture terms them—and at all events the Spirit had taught him: 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.*' And does not this offer of God and this answer of Solomon prove most emphatically the unspeakable need, and the glory, and the beauty, and the preciousness of justice in any land?

Brethren, in this very well known narrative of Scripture it seems to me, and I trust that it will seem to you also, that we may trace, and not only trace, but at once plainly see, a full explanation of that solemn and important ceremony witnessed now in this town for the first time in its annals. Needless will it be for me to dwell at any length on the excellency of the law, and of its due righteous administration. It is clear as the

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4.

sun at noon. You have seen one ray shining on it from our text and subject. Therefore I would now pass on to remind you that hitherto the law, for this grand and extensive county of Yorkshire, has been, in its highest, most public, and conspicuous functions—I mean at the Assizes—administered only at the city of York. It has now been arranged that a portion of these functions should henceforth be transferred hither. You will no doubt receive this honour, this responsibility, in a worthy manner. There is no county in all England where more of that outward respect—not an unmeaning thing, but one full of the utmost significance—has ever been paid and is still paid to the Assizes. But, avoiding comparisons, you know that in the circuits throughout all England the Judges come as the representatives of the Queen's Majesty. The High Sheriff of the county, who during office has very great authority and exalted rank, meets and welcomes the Judges on their coming, surrounds them with all those appropriate tokens of guardianship, loyalty, honour, service, and respect, which the grand ceremonial of yesterday, on their reception, and of to-day, in their attendance at your church, has so well embodied and illustrated. The Grand Jury is summoned—and they willingly obey the summons—men of integrity, men of ability, men of wealth, men of large and most extensive influence in their separate spheres, men who leave their homes, and their private avocations to fulfil a public duty, and labour for it day after day with all zeal and diligence. Another

Jury also is chosen to fulfil its own quite separate, and, at the same time, very responsible office. And as the holy bond, the religious sanction of all, in special admonition and remembrance that all power and authority (and if *all* power and authority, how specially then that which concerns the business of an Assize, with its most solemn and awful accompaniments) 'is ordained of God'—in remembrance of all this, an Assize Sermon is preached; and the minister of Jesus Christ takes his place also in the service and attendance on the Judges; and all is conducted in the public courts under appeals of the most hallowed kinds to the living, ever-present God, and to the truth of that holy word by which all will be judged at the coming and appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, I ask you, does not all this explain—does not all this most amply justify, yes, more, sanctify our proceedings? For they represent homage to our beloved Queen, in the person of the Judges here; and all reverential deference to God—the God of all judgment and right between man and man. And all this is expressed in sundry forms of all due solemnity and splendour, and yet by no means more solemn or more splendid than the occasion rightly deserves and demands. They have for the first time been seen among you and brought nigh to you. God grant that they may not be mere forms to any present here in any rank or condition of society! God grant that they may be power, spirit, and life—a source of intelligent thankfulness to God for the blessings of order and peace, and

for the means of their happy continuance to you and to your children and your children's children from generation to generation!

The wonderful gathering witnessed here yesterday may surely be taken as a sign or indication that the spirit among you generally is one of order and peace. In all places there will, alas! be some of a lawless, disobedient, disorderly character, but when we see the judges of our land welcomed, as they have been, by such a multitude, showing in its conduct so much to admire and be thankful for, the spectacle is indeed one of high promise.

There is no spot, no corner of our noble land, to which we may not rejoice in belonging; yet its features and distinctive parts differ very much one from another. Each has its own characteristics—each its claims for due appreciation. Think of our country at large! One district has its cornfields; another has its pasturage; another its woods and forests; another its iron, its coal, its subterranean riches; another has its ports and harbours for our ships and seafaring men. So it is with our cities and our towns. We have London, our great metropolis; we have Oxford and Cambridge, our seats of learning; we have our ancient cities, with their castles, walls, moats, churches, and all kinds of venerable structure; yes, with all their records and historic annals, and all the poetic story which ennobles them—cities which your ancestors knew as well as you know your own, at which their eyes once

gazed, which their steps once traversed, in which they delighted, and where, perhaps, their interests were centred as heartily as yours are now in any place of your own citizenship. Who among us, I ask, would not feel it almost a personal loss were any one of these noble remains of old time swept away from English soil? To us they are most precious, if we have taste, heart, feeling to prize them. They are part and parcel of our interests, ennobling our spirits, uniting us with our forefathers and with all inherited from them, reminding us of the claims which posterity has upon us, speaking to us with voices of the past, and voices of the future too, calling us and raising us, at certain and befitting times, out of the needful stir and din and pressing cares and pursuits of each passing hour. There is just such a city not far from here—even the old metropolis of the north—even York—the antique gem and historic glory of these parts of England. But narrow indeed must that mind be which has no room, no welcome and capacity for other and distinct, though kindred ranges of thought and admiration. Other towns we have, now vast and populous, where at no very distant time the mere village or mere hamlet stood. They have risen rapidly. They have risen marvellously. They are now the centres of industry, ingenuity, wealth, integrity, ability, and renown. Their productions have traversed the earth—telling of England's princely manufacturers—telling of England's mechanicians and artisans, and of all the honour which belongs to them. And what should we be without such localities? We can

understand and prize them also. We can see the glory of the new, no less than the glory of the old. Let them blend together—not be antagonistic! There is precisely such a town here—even the town of Leeds, abundant in wealth, in all goodly institutions, in skilful guides and leaders of its industry, in its prosperous educated population. The seat of judgment, the high majesty of law—the delegated power of our Queen and ‘Kings to come’ will henceforth be exercised among you. You will henceforth participate in this honour. You will henceforth have your responsibilities and duties also in connection with it. I pray you to learn them, consider and apply them. I pray you to begin well—I pray you to inaugurate these first Assizes, not according to the course and the spirit of the world which knoweth not God, but in the spirit of prayer, in the light of Scriptural truth, and in fresh resolution, by God’s grace, to live, privately and publicly, at home and abroad, in heart and word and deed, more for that one most fit, most noble object for all Christian people—even the glory of God!

Brethren, it seemed to me that on such an occasion as this there were certain things, certain special things, which the preacher in his sermon ought not to pass by unnoticed. It would seem an omission were no allusion made to the honour and obedience ever due to the law, when now, and for the first time, you have welcomed the arrival of its high functionaries. Again, I think it would have been an omission, too, were no

reference made to those local marks and distinctions, rendering you, the inhabitants of Leeds, such an important part in the body corporate of Great Britain and Ireland. This I have now, so far as able, done. Rare are those occasions—though I entertain no doubt that this is one of them—wherein the minister of Jesus Christ could rightly occupy so much of his sermon on any other subjects than those directly and personally bearing on the welfare of his hearers, one by one, as everlasting souls. Rarely indeed could he rightly defer so long those peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, and that peculiar practice which they lead to in every soul of man, woman, or child who receives them in faith and by the operation of God the Holy Spirit. But that time has now arrived—the time to preach the everlasting Gospel. Accordingly I now entreat you to put away, for a very few minutes, just those very subjects on which I have hitherto spoken, to shut your eyes to all these scenes of orderly magnificence, to think no more of mere human laws and ordinances, howsoever excellent they be, to forget your mere earthly citizenship—to drop for a moment all consideration of yourselves, as children of this noble kingdom where we dwell. May the Spirit, for Christ's sake, now make room for thoughts very different from these—for considerations infinitely more important to you all—even as 'the heaven is higher than the earth,' even as eternity is more than your short time of sojourn in this fleeting world, even as God's future judgment of each one of you is sure, even as your citizenship in the everlasting Zion and that king-

dom of Christ which shall never be destroyed must outshine, outvalues all things which this whole world could bring and concentrate together to offer at your feet for acceptance. All earthly gifts of God are not only good in themselves, but have a fresh goodness and glory in them as types and signs and interpretations of His heavenly gifts. All things are prepared for us by Him towards our salvation. The Saviour's invitation to you is, 'Come, for all things are now ready'—the 'Bread of life,' the abiding, ever-springing grace of the Holy Ghost, the garments of salvation, pardon and peace, acceptance and honour, strength against temptation and for the service of God, the promise of Jesus Himself to be with you in your dying hour, the abundant entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Here is the special, rich, infinite provision made by God for your peace, your safety, your obedience to Him here below, and for your everlasting blessedness hereafter. And all this is now freely offered you—offered as a gift. Jesus came to this sinful and sorrowing earth, and Jesus lived, suffered, laboured, died upon it, died with the utterance on his blessed lips, 'It is finished.' What? Our salvation—that it might be a free gift to you. While the 'wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Away from you all thoughts of earning it, deserving it, or any such thing! Let that alone for ever! It has pleased God to give all deliverance from everlasting misery, all possession of eternal joy, through faith in His own dear Son, whose name, as Christians, we bear. 'Believe on

the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* Let no sense or conviction of your sin keep you from Him, no sense of your own weakness, no sense of your own unworthiness! These are the very things which should bring you to Him. He sent for 'the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.'† Satan, and the world, and the flesh may have wounded you. You may be 'poor in spirit' and cast down. You may feel unable to move one step to heaven, or even see your way to it. But His word for you—ever sounding for you—is, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'‡ And knowing how many there are of fainting and labouring heart, through the sense of sin before the Lord, and through want of that liberty of spirit, which the Gospel and free grace of God alone can bestow, I rejoice to end with this invitation. If you have not responded to it yet, if you have not received Christ as your all in all, then riches may abound to you; honours may encircle you; talents may distinguish you; success may crown your industry; praise and popularity may attend your steps, and your families may thrive and prosper to the uttermost—yes, all these things may be yours; and yet the solemn question of the Lord Jesus Christ must be addressed to you still, 'What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'§ But if Christ be yours—if you are washed in His blood and sanctified by His Spirit, and show forth that holiness and those good works

* Acts xvi. 31.

† Luke xiv. 21.

‡ Matt. xi. 28.

§ Mark vii. 36.

which are the fruit of faith, then happy are you—yea, truly blessed ; and may God add from this vast congregation and this populous and noble town, large, very large numbers to His own saved church, and make the remaining days of all His true servants here and around us by far their best days, as more filled with joy in their Lord and Saviour, and, therefore, more zeal, diligence, and devotedness in His happy service, until they end in everlasting blessedness through Jesus Christ our Lord !

THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN YORK MINSTER AT THE WINTER GAOL
DELIVERY

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1864.

II. COR., CH. V. VER. 10 AND PT. OF VER. 11.

We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

THE Apostle here FIRST sets before us that most tremendous, but most plain, clear, universally recognised event and reality—namely, the judgment to come, recognised, in some shape or other, among all nations,* of all times, but clearly brought to light for us, in all its particulars, through God's revealed word. 'We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.'

He speaks, SECONDLY, of this future event and reality, as being the cause why he pursues a certain line of

* This principle of a judgment to come Justin Martyr propounded to the Gentiles, as generally acknowledged by all their writers, as the great encouragement for his Apology of the Christian Religion. *Pearson on the Creed*, note art. vii. p. 453.

preaching, writing, and conduct in behalf of his fellow-creatures. 'Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.'

I cannot but consider that this subject, both directly and indirectly, may prove very suitable for this present solemn and responsible occasion.

Looking therefore to God the Father Almighty, through Jesus Christ His Son, for the light and the power of the Holy Spirit, that He may come among us, and with His great might succour us, I shall FIRST ask for your close, heartfelt attention, now so unquestionably claimed. SECONDLY, I shall seek to employ this event as Paul employed it in his preaching, writing, and whole line of conduct—viz., as the ground or motive of persuasion, so that the judgment may not be to you a day of ruin and of condemnation, but one in which you may stand justified from all guilt and accepted by the Lord; and having passed through it unscathed, may receive your 'perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in God's eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'* No subject can be simpler or more elementary. Scripture itself defines the 'eternal judgment' as among 'the first principles of the doctrine of Christ.'† No subject can be mightier, and at the same time more important to us than that of the text, which tells, first, of our own personal appearance at the judgment of Christ;

* Burial Service.

† Heb. vi. 1.

and, secondly, of that love, that gracious condescension of our God, which, through the Gospel, persuades man to be saved.

‘We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.’ How difficult, nay, more, impossible, it is worthily to realise the awe and solemnity of such a heavenly court and its consequences to us! But surely that is no reason, no excuse, for refusing our attention to it. Rather should it be a loud and imperative claim in the opposite way. Few things on earth—few things in any nation—certainly nothing which takes place in your city, even before your eyes, can be more awful and more solemn than the Court of Assize; specially that where criminal cases are judged by the judge on circuit. Remember that he represents the majesty of the land, the power derived from that Almighty God by whom kings reign.* The assizes are accompanied by all those outward public tokens of respect which the occasion demands. All imaginable *sanction* attends them. I use the word both in a religious and in a legal form. Should any one, or any assemblage of men, attempt to interfere with them in the smallest matter, all the power of the state would be brought to bear or concentrated against him or them, fast and mighty as any human means could accomplish. The accused are brought forth. They are tried and proved. They are declared innocent or guilty. With some it is justification. No charge can be sustained against them.

* Prov. viii. 15, speaking of Christ in that title of ‘wisdom’ which He bears throughout the chapter.

Sometimes they go forth to liberty with judicial praise, and only to shine brighter, like pure gold, from the test applied. With some it is otherwise. They are declared guilty, with not only shame and dishonour for life, but with chastisement, imprisonment, banishment, labour, servitude, even death. All is unalterable, too, all utterly irrevocable, unless some cause for mercy should appear to the sovereign. Brethren, just think for a moment of all this! Realise it, if you can—and that not abstractedly, but as standing in the place, or having one 'dearest to your heart standing in the place, either of one justified or of one condemned! But you cannot! It is utterly beyond you, unless such absolutely were your condition, or that of one whom you loved. And yet what a mere outline, what a faint shadow, what an almost unappreciable likeness is here, when we think for a moment what it must be, what it will be, for us (as it is in the Greek), to be '*made manifest*'* at the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. †

But it would do us, brethren, no good whatsoever merely to know Jesus Christ as our Judge hereafter.

* φανερωθῆναι.

† 'The reality of this act (the judgment) doth certainly consist in the final determination and actual disposing of all persons, in soul and body, to their eternal condition; and in what manner this shall particularly be performed is not so certain unto us; but that, which is sufficient for us, it is represented under a formal judiciary process.' *Pearson on the Creed*, art. vii. p. 464. Ed. 1845.

Unless we knew Him here, during our present life, in another very different light, in quite another office towards us, no one on earth could be saved. Let us, first, then, regard Him as the Saviour of sinners, and then as our Judge. This is the privilege—this is the heritage of all true Christians. Let us thankfully and joyfully avail ourselves of it!

At His first coming, during the days of His dwelling in our human body on this earth—the ‘Immanuel, or God with us’—Jesus did not come as a Judge. There was nothing in Him of that character or office then—nothing whatsoever. Then He came for one exclusive purpose, viz., to seek and to save that which was lost—to suffer on our account, ‘in His great humility’—to give Himself for us—‘to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.’ But observe and remember, in order to elucidate our present subject and impress it more strongly, that He then was ever wont specially to *disclaim* the duty or office of a Judge. Wickedness and crime, against God and man, went on just as much while He was on the earth as if He had not come at all—just as much in His own nation—just as much in those around Him, where He lived and taught and did His works of unspeakable mercy and love. Nay, more! There were some acts and manifestations of sin more heinous and hateful than ever were perpetrated either before or since. I mean, as you will conclude, acts of iniquity against His own most blessed Person, and, in Him,

against His Father Almighty, the Maker and Possessor of all things and creatures in the universe. Let us realise—lay that to heart!

But, in spite of all this, did Jesus *judge* any one during his stay on the earth? No, no, not one! You may rely upon this answer. There was such harmony, such perfect consistency in all He did, in this and everything else, that you will not find, by any searching, one single instance where He departed from this rule or principle, if we may so speak; and every careful observer of His history would, of course, *see* this as proved in the narratives of the Gospel. And most surely would any one who could enter into the character and spirit of His life and ministry *feel* it in the depths of his heart. But this is not all. Lest it might be that any one should misunderstand Him, on this very point He Himself over and over again asserts and declares the truth on the matter. His words are, concerning His mission, these, ‘I judge no man.’ ‘God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.’* Again, ‘I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.’† You no doubt remember how often men (who did not understand Him), in their darkness and their ignorance, wanted to make Him a Judge. But He would not have it so. They brought Him the ‘woman taken in adultery.’ The end of this arraignment was mercy and warning, but no judgment in it! ‘Neither do I condemn

* John iii. 17.

† John xii. 47.

thee (i. e., to judicial punishment); go and sin no more.' Even His own followers appealed to Him for judgment for the execution of well-deserved wrath. The Samaritans would not receive Him on His journey to God's ordinances; James and John appealed to Him, 'Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them;*' nor would He let Peter smite with the sword. And when one of the company around Him said unto Him, 'Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me,' this was the immediate answer, 'Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?'† So, brethren, you plainly see that, whether Jesus had to meet sin against the law or sin against Himself, or sin (if it were such) of injustice to a near kinsman, it was all the same. No *criminal*, no *civil* cause could awaken judgment from Him. So far as He was concerned, the sword of justice slept in the scabbard. His work and office, then, was one of mercy alone—pure, unmingled, exclusive mercy—and such, God be praised, it remains still—precisely the same. He is just the Saviour still. Not yet has He drawn His avenging sword—the sword of Divine judgment and wrath, revealed no less surely than His mercy, and which shall hereafter strike 'every soul of man that doeth evil,'‡ and who shall have 'died in his sins.'

* Luke ix. 53–56.

† Luke xii. 13, 14.

‡ Rom. ii. 9.

We have thus marked, brethren, the past and the present office of our Lord Jesus Christ as purely and exclusively that of a Saviour. No less certainly, at His *future* coming, which *may* take place at any moment, and which we know, from the word of Jesus Himself, *will* come suddenly, when men do not expect it, He will at once appear in the office of a Judge. ‘He shall sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations.’* The ‘Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son.’† And now ‘God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained,‡ even Jesus Christ. And God will then ‘bring to light the hidden things of darkness,’§ and ‘bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.’|| In all this I have chiefly used God’s own word and declarations. These are the things which made even Felix tremble. The mighty Roman was bowed down under them. What awe and trembling should seize every one of us, with all our light and abundant revelation concerning the sure Judgment of God, unless we clearly see the way of escape from condemnation, personally take it, and thus are safe in the sure refuge from the wrath to come!

This then is the ‘terror of the Lord,’ knowing

* Matt. xxv. 31, 32.

† John v. 22.

‡ Acts xvii. 31.

§ 1 Cor. iv. 5.

|| Ecc. xii. 14.

which, as ministers and preachers, we 'persuade men'—persuade them to be saved while the opportunity and day of grace remains. And I would do so now, after the example of St. Paul in the text, by keeping your attention still closely fixed (as the Lord may enable both me and you) on the judgment to come. God be praised, many 'will stand in the congregation of the righteous,'* on that day. There will be 'a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues, to stand before the throne, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.†' 'They shall shine as the sun' in the kingdom of their Father, justified, sanctified, accepted, glorified. And why all this? Why all this freedom even from the smallest portion of condemnation? Why is it that they, so far from enduring any punishment, or penalty, or judgment at all, shall even 'sit with Christ on His judgment throne,†' even judge angels, and have their marvellous share in Christ's judicial honours of that day—all which is most clearly told us in Scripture, for our faith simply but surely to embrace? Why all this immunity, why all this honour for the saved? Is it because they were not sinners by nature and birth? Certainly not. They were. Is it because they were not sinners in their own practice—in thought, and word, and deed? They were. Is it because there was anything in their lives by which they earned or merited salvation? Nothing of the kind. Why then

* Ps. i. 5.

† Rev. vii. 9.

† Rev. iii. 21.

will they be saved? Why will the judgment day be to them among the things of which it is written for them, 'All things are yours'—as it were, put for their good in their own hands—'all things are yours; whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours'?* Nothing 'shall by any means hurt you.'† Nothing 'shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'‡ Why, I repeat, all this immunity—all this safety—all this glory?

The answer is one. The answer is plain. The answer is already in all your minds and hearts who truly know of the Gospel, and is ready, if need were, on your lips for immediate declaration. They will be saved at the judgment day simply and exclusively because Jesus Christ will acknowledge them as His own. As Scripture tells us, they were 'chosen in Christ before the foundations of the world were laid,' and He loved them with His own everlasting love, and therefore with His lovingkindness He drew them to Himself during their life and sojourn on this earth. By His Spirit He made them 'new creatures.' He convinced them of their sins by the same Spirit—showed them their need of just such a Saviour as He is—gave them faith to receive and embrace Him as their own—led them in the paths of holiness and righteousness for His name's sake. § Through His

* 1 Cor. iii. 22.

† Luke x. 19.

‡ Rom. viii. 39.

§ Ps. xxiii.

blood He washed away their sins, so that not one stain, spot, or speck—and if I could find any smaller word I would use it—should remain on them for condemnation. And this having been their blessed state, many passages tell us, in all their fulness and detail, what Jesus *will* do for them on the judgment day. Just listen to a few of them! He will confess them as His own before His Father and our Father and all the holy angels. The word of introduction for the court of Heaven is already written: ‘Behold I and the children which God hath given me.’* Jesus will present them ‘unblameable and unreprougeable in His sight,’†—‘faultless before the presence of His glory’‡—and ‘who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?’§ No one. Because ‘it is God that justifieth.’ It is Christ that died for them, has lived and made intercession for them, and shall claim them as His own ‘purchased possession,’|| members of His body, whereof He Himself shall be the ever-living head, and of whom it is written that they ‘shall serve Him, and they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads.’¶

Such is the high and favoured condition promised and assured to all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such are the privileges, all freely given them—nothing less than complete, everlasting deliverance from all that is evil—nothing less than admission to

* Heb. ii. 13.

† Col. i. 22.

‡ Jude 24.

§ Rom. viii. 33.

|| Eph. i. 14.

¶ Rev. xxii. 4.

more than all imaginable bliss, and that for ever. St. Paul, on the one hand, knew well that 'terror of the Lord' which shall be revealed on the coming judgment day against all 'who forget God.' On the other hand, he knew the fulness of the blessing which that day would reveal and usher in for all the church of Christ, His own 'peculiar people.' Therefore he *persuaded* men, as our text tells he did. He besought them to be 'reconciled to God' now, without delay. By every argument, every exhortation, every statement of truth, as connected with that mercy which in God, through Jesus Christ, 'rejoiceth against judgment,'* he sought to draw souls from the kingdom of Satan and the power of sin into the kingdom of the Saviour and the power of His grace, through the Holy Spirit.

We, too, as ministers and preachers, must do just likewise. We must not shun to 'declare all the counsel of God' and the terror of the Lord, and all which Scripture tells in the way of warning. Still, however, and for that very reason, we are to *persuade* men to repent, believe, and serve God, immediately, and in all things. We are to commend God's infinite love—to repeat continually all the offerings, all the invitations, all the compassionate and most tender calls of the Saviour. Nor will they be in vain. For His promise holds good, and His preachers may hear it, for their encouragement, whether it be in some gorgeous minster, or whether it be in the humblest place of assemblage

* James ii. 13.

where the Gospel was ever preached—‘Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.’* And He shall ‘work with them, and confirm the word with signs following.’† That these signs may abound in you this day and henceforth is my earnest prayer, and the prayer of many here, for themselves and those around them—signs such as these: more conviction of sin, more true and living faith, more holy resolution and ability to live for God entirely and devotedly. And it may be no barren or unprofitable thing for us all, at this solemn time of an earthly and human assize, to take from it some symbol and type—faint indeed though it must be, and making us almost hesitate to use it—but still some faint type of the final judicature of souls, whereof the text tells. And while, as we are bounden, we thank our God for this and all the righteous institutions of our land; and while we pray, as we are bounden, that His divine guidance may attend all concerned in them, and specially those who preside in the chief dignity, but at the same time in the chief responsibility; and while we pray for the criminals and prisoners, that even the most hardened, most abandoned among them may be changed, in heart and life, by the grace of God, and find mercy through Christ Jesus, and live henceforth religiously before God, and honestly before men—while we would attend to these, and to all such-like plain calls upon us, let us not be inattentive, at such a time as this, to another very plain, very loud, and obvious call, on our own

* Matt. xxviii. 20.

† Mark xvi. 20.

account. Let us also examine ourselves, deeply and closely—yea, rather, let us ask God to ‘search us, and try us, and see if there be any way of wickedness in us, and lead us in the way everlasting.’* Let us do it specially as those who ‘must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ,’ to answer for the things done in our body, and to show whose we have been upon earth, either for condemnation or for salvation, accordingly as we may have served Satan or Christ—and every one is serving one or the other, however unpalatable this plain statement may, to some hearers, be. And let us be persuaded now, if we have never been persuaded yet—or if it, happily, has been so with us, let the persuasion of the Gospel have fresh weight upon us, that we may live for the judgment day, for God, and eternity. And God grant that when it does come it may be no terror to us, but a day of exceeding joy—of joy infinitely greater than that which any one accused upon earth ever yet experienced when freed from all condemnation! For what can there be compared with God’s own justification of a soul, and that for ever, including the sure deliverance from hell, and the sure title to heaven? Oh! that we may learn our prayer of faith, even from the lips of one whom God the Spirit very speedily, but, at the same time very fully and mightily taught concerning Jesus, both as his Saviour and as his Judge. ‘Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.’† Be Thou to me, personally,

* Ps. cxxxix. 23.

† Luke xxiii. 42.

individually, all that Thy name expresses and contains*—all which Almighty God Himself attached to it for ever, when He, by His angel, gave the command, ‘Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.’† What a promise for the judgment day concerning that Redeemer of whom you have sung in your beautiful hymn of this very day—

As Judge, in clouds of light,
He soon will come again ;
And His true members all unite,
With Him in heaven to reign.

* The thought is taken from the inscription on an old monumental brass in the chapel of New College, Oxford :

‘ Bone Jesu, sis mihi Jesus ! ’

‘ O good Jesus, be Thou Jesus unto me ! ’

† Matt. i. 21.

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